(b) The ICICI have submitted an interin report.

(c) In their interim report the ICICI have clearly pointed out that the various mines being operated by ECL can be classified as follows:

Group I Profitable mines
Group II Areas with profit potential
Group III High capacity Longwall mines
Group IV Losing mines with difficult working conditions

For Group IV mines, the ICICI could suggest no viable solution and recommended phasing out of such mines. 64 mines of ECL located in 6 Areas of the company belong to the Group IV mines highlighted in the ICICI report.

(d) The Board of Directors of ECL in their meeting held on 22.10.1998 passed a resolution of close down those 64 coal mines. This resolution was passed by the ECL Board of context of the acute financial problems besetting the company for the long time. However no step as prescribed under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 for retrenchment of work men has been taken by the ECL management because discussions are under way with the Trade Unions in an effort to evolve an acceptable solution to the financial problems of ECL. A fresh package for turn-around of ECL has been proposed which is under the consideration of the Trade Unions.

Neglect of underground coal mining

789. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that underground coal mining is a neglected area and no project worth the name is being undertaken;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Underground mining is also given due consideration based on factors such as geology of the area, depth of coal deposit, demand of coal, grade of coal and viability of the project. Since nationalisation as many as 100 underground mining projects have been completed which have replaced some of the exhausting reserves of the on-going mines. 88 underground on-going projects are in operation in Coal India Limited. These 88 on-going projects will yield 36 MT capacity addition on completion. On successful implementation of these projects, Coal India Limited will be able to increase underground coal production from present level of 54 MT to 68 MT by the terminal year of IX plan 2001-02. In Singareni Collieries Comapny Limited also, 18 new underground projects were sanctioned during the last 10 years.

(c) Steps taken by Coal India Limited to improve the status of underground mining include mechanisation in Bord and Pillar mining, working of Longwall faces in place of conventional manual mining and introduction of modern and appropriate technologies on 'Risk-Gain-sharing basis through global tendering.

Coal production in Assam

790. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total quantity of coal produced annually by Coal India in Assam during the last three years;

(b) whether Government have any plans to develop Coal fields of Lado-Margherita region; if so, the details thereof; and

(c) which is the market of coal produced in this region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) The total quantity of coal